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"Talking Frankly" about David Irving

A Critical Analysis of David Irving's Statement on the Holocaust

By Hadding Scott

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(1)

This is how David Irving describes Himmler's letter ordering the demolition of Treblinka:

> *"There is a letter in the private papers of Heinrich Himmler, which says, when the operation in Treblinka is finished, I want the whole site demolished and removed. Nothing must remain. I want the whole site grassed over, and a farmhouse, a farmstead built there in its place, which can be given to some Ukrainian to run."* (1:41:43 – 1:41:49)

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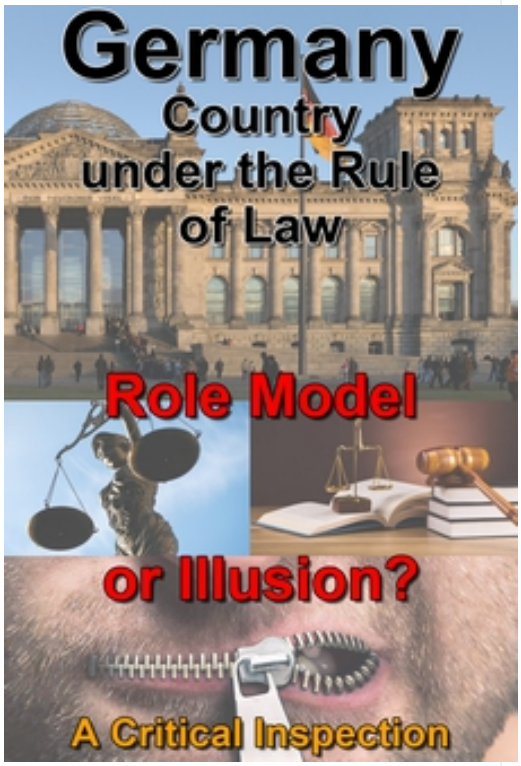

Germany, Country under the Rule of Law: Role Model or Illusion?

Germany enjoys the reputation of being a liberal, democratic country under the rule of law. The reality, however, is quite different, because when push comes to shove, the German judiciary can do whatever they want. And that's exactly what

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It seems that David Irving heard of this letter for the first time when the crown prosecutor asked him about it during his 1988 testimony for Ernst Zündel. Mainstream Holocaust-historiography has always interpreted this letter to mean that Himmler had Treblinka demolished so that the advancing Red Army would not discover whatever had been happening there.

This interpretation appeared in 1945 in the *VOKS Bulletin*. VOKS, the "All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries," was an entity created by the government of the Soviet Union. *VOKS Bulletin* stated:

> *"Lupine was planted on the site of the camp and a settler named Streben built himself a house there. The house is no longer there, for it has been burnt down since.*
>
> *"What was the Germans' purpose in this? They wished to hide the traces of the slaughter of millions of people in the Treblinka hell."* (VOKS Bulletin 1945 #1/2, p. 36)

(These sentences, incidentally, also appear with slight alterations in Treblinka survivor Chil Rajchman's book *Treblinka*.) In that early published account, a farmhouse was not built by the SS and turned over to a Ukrainian, as Irving says. Rather, the "settler" built his own farmhouse. But fundamentally David Irving has adopted the 1945 Soviet line on what was done on the site of Treblinka and why.

There is, however, another, completely different explanation for when and why Treblinka was

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demolished. Already on 5 January 1943 the head of Operation Reinhardt, Odilo Globocnik, submitted a report on "the economic winding-up" of the operation. On 19 October 1943 Globocnik had dissolved all the constituent camps and terminated Operation Reinhardt. (IMT transcript, 5 August 1946) The termination of Operation Reinhardt was thus initiated 20 months, and completed 10 months, before the arrival of the Red Army at Treblinka in early August 1944. Consequently the demolition of Treblinka and the restoration of nature on the site does not seem to have been caused by the Red Army's approach. Also, consider that Majdanek, which was also under Globocnik's command, was not bulldozed.

There is disagreement about what the alleged settler's name was. *VOKS Bulletin* gives the name as Streben. Elsewhere the name is given as Strebel. David Irving, on his website, gives the settler's name as Streibel (which happens also to be the surname of the Bavarian commandant of Trawniki labor-camp) (D. Irving, *A Radical's Diary*, 2 March 2007). Whether Streibel or Strebel or Streben, it seems an unlikely name for a Ukrainian. If there really was a settler on the site of Treblinka, and one of those names was his name, he was most likely a German.

On his website, David Irving says that the settler was a Ukrainian who had been a guard at Treblinka – which makes a tidier conspiracy-theory than letting the settler be some *random* Ukrainian, except that the settler is said to have burned down his farmhouse and departed ahead of the Red Army, which negates the entire purpose of establishing a *Ukrainian* farmer there to disguise the place.

Obviously the settler, if he existed, did not build his farmhouse, nor move into a farmhouse built for him, with the expectation of burning the farmhouse down and fleeing within a few months. The alleged sinister motive for having a Ukrainian farmer settle on the site is not consistent with what subsequently happened. If this settler existed, the most likely interpretation is that he was hoping that the Red Army would not arrive anytime soon.

It would not seem reasonable to interpret the demolition of Treblinka in 1943 as a destruction of evidence, if it were not already assumed that terrible things were done there. David Irving, citing the demolition as implicit evidence of German guilt, thus engages in circular reasoning.

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